

Rep. Henry A. Waxman (D)



Elected 1974; 16th term

At a time when congressional oversight of the executive branch is declining due to one-party government and long-term changes in Congress, Waxman's investigative skills and partisan fervor have made him one of the few remaining lawmakers who is still devoted to that task.

He uses his role as the top-ranking Democrat on the Government Reform Committee to badger the majority Republicans to hold hearings on Bush administration policies. Waxman sometimes teams up with the committee's moderate Republican chairman, Thomas M. Davis III of Virginia, to send pointed inquiries to federal agencies on such subjects as the flu vaccine shortage. Other times, he scolds the panel over a long list of hearings he thinks it should have had, such as the failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, the abuses at the Abu Ghraib prison near Baghdad, and the awarding of lucrative contracts to Halliburton, the oil services company Dick Cheney headed before he became vice president.

And as the second-ranking Democrat on the Energy and Commerce Committee, Waxman uses techniques similar to those of John D. Dingell of Michigan, the panel's senior Democrat. Both are precise questioners during oversight hearings and force agency officials to provide extensive information. Waxman is aggressive but he employs humor and his questioning is firmly controlled, a style that can bedevil his adversaries.

Waxman is among the House's most adroit political practitioners. While he brings his extensive knowledge on a broad policy portfolio into behind-the-scenes negotiations, he can be a forceful partisan combatant in front of the television cameras. But he is patient and willing to cut deals with Republicans when necessary, as his pragmatic relationship with Davis suggests. Compromise, Waxman said, "can further your ideas and even help you improve your ideas."

Sometimes he goes beyond aggressive questioning, however. In 2004, Waxman and 18 other House members sued the Department of Health and Human Services to make public all its recent cost estimates of the options for overhauling Medicare. The lawmakers said the documents would prove the administration knew the measure it advocated in late 2003 would cost far more than the budget allowed. Democrats said the White House hid its own estimates in order to push the bill to its razor-thin enactment. The department "should have released these estimates during congressional consideration of the Medicare bill," Waxman said. "The administration's continued refusal to release this information has left us no choice."

Waxman's partisan side got the better of him in 2001, when he accused the White House of favoritism toward energy companies and suggested that the stock holdings of Karl Rove, the president's political adviser, posed potential conflicts of interest. It was this crusade that led Waxman to unwittingly place in some jeopardy the ability of Congress to oversee the workings of the executive branch.

Knowing they could not get requisite Republican backing for subpoenas, Waxman and Dingell asked the Government Accountability Office in 2001 to probe the involvement of energy companies in the formulation of administration energy policy. The GAO ended up filing an unprecedented lawsuit in 2002 seeking to compel Cheney to release records of his energy task force. In early 2003, the GAO decided not to appeal a federal judge's ruling that the congressional agency lacked the legal standing to bring such a suit — which Waxman called "a tremendous setback for open government."

CAPITOL OFFICE

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COMMITTEES

Energy & Commerce

Government Reform - ranking member

HOMETOWN

Los Angeles

BORN

Sept. 12, 1939, Los Angeles, Calif.

RELIGION

Jewish

FAMILY

Wife, Janet Waxman; two children

EDUCATION

U. of California, Los Angeles, B.A. 1961 (political science), J.D. 1964

CAREER

Lawyer

POLITICAL HIGHLIGHTS

Calif. Assembly, 1968-74

ELECTION RESULTS

2004 GENERAL

Henry A. Waxman (D) 216,682 71.2%

Victor Elizalde (R) 87,465 28.8%

2004 PRIMARY

Henry A. Waxman (D) unopposed

2002 GENERAL

Henry A. Waxman (D) 130,604 70.4%

Tony Goss (R) 54,989 29.6%

PREVIOUS WINNING PERCENTAGES

2000 (76%); 1998 (74%); 1996 (68%); 1994 (68%);

1992 (61%); 1990 (69%); 1988 (72%); 1986 (88%);

1984 (63%); 1982 (65%); 1980 (64%); 1978 (63%);

1976 (68%); 1974 (64%)

Waxman's main base of operations before the Government Reform panel was the Energy and Commerce Committee, where he chaired the Health and the Environment Subcommittee for 16 years until the Republicans became the majority party in 1995. He has won many of his victories by maneuvering persistently to secure one small objective at a time, rather than making a broad frontal assault.

On occasion, Waxman has looked to cut deals with Energy and Commerce Republicans. In 2002, he supported a compromise with Chairman Billy Tauzin of Louisiana to increase funding for the Food and Drug Administration, accelerate approvals of medical devices and allow private parties to inspect factories. But Waxman opposed Tauzin on other issues in the 107th Congress, including an energy overhaul that he called a "lost opportunity" to conserve energy.

A one-time smoker, Waxman now is the leading congressional crusader against the tobacco industry. He convened the 1994 hearing during which the chief executives of the nation's seven largest tobacco companies testified under oath that they did not believe nicotine was addictive.

Waxman grew up in an apartment above the Los Angeles grocery store run by his father, who was the son of Russian immigrants and who instilled in his son an appreciation of New Deal ideals. Waxman's political career began at UCLA in the 1960s, when he and fellow student — and now House colleague — Howard L. Berman became active in California's Federation of Young Democrats. In 1968, after a term as chairman of the state federation, Waxman, with Berman's support, challenged Democratic state Assemblyman Lester McMillan in a primary. McMillan had been in office 26 years and was nearing retirement. Waxman beat him with 64 percent of the vote.

It was the beginning of the so-called Waxman-Berman machine, an informal network of like-minded politicians who pooled their resources to back candidates with money, organization and political savvy. The "machine" was functioning so smoothly in 1974 that Waxman had little trouble winning a new House seat created with him in mind. Berman waltzed into his own House seat eight years later.

Waxman's constituents in Beverly Hills and part of West Hollywood are not only politically involved, but many are also wealthy. They have been generous with their donations to Waxman's political action committee, and in turn, its contributions to other House lawmakers have broadened Waxman's influence among his colleagues. His own campaigns are formalities; he has never won re-election with less than 61 percent of the vote.

KEY VOTES

2004

- Yes Extend federal unemployment benefits by 13 weeks
- ? Pass \$283.2 billion, six-year federal highway and mass transit bill
- No Approve \$146 billion multi-year extension of previously enacted middle-class tax breaks
- No Amend the Constitution to prohibit same-sex marriage
- No Cut corporate taxes \$137 billion over 10 years
- Yes Reorganize U.S. intelligence agencies as proposed by Sept. 11 commission

2003

- No Cut taxes by \$330 billion through fiscal 2013
- Yes Block Bush rule scaling back overtime pay for some white-collar federal workers
- Yes Do not allow use of search warrants without first notifying subjects
- No Allow importation of prescription drugs
- ? Create private school voucher program in Washington, D.C.
- No Ban "partial birth" abortion except to save a woman's life
- Yes Split \$18.6 billion in Iraq aid into half-grant, half-loan
- No Overhaul Medicare and create prescription drug benefit

CQ VOTE STUDIES

	PARTY UNITY		PRESIDENTIAL SUPPORT	
	Support	Oppose	Support	Oppose
2004	97%	3%	13%	87%
2003	97%	3%	16%	84%
2002	98%	2%	25%	75%
2001	95%	5%	32%	68%
2000	98%	2%	87%	13%

INTEREST GROUPS

	AFL-CIO	ADA	CCUS	ACU
2004	100%	100%	20%	0%
2003	85%	95%	34%	17%
2002	100%	80%	33%	5%
2001	100%	90%	36%	0%
2000	89%	90%	45%	4%

CALIFORNIA 30

West Los Angeles County — Santa Monica, West Hollywood

Boasting such glamorous locales as Beverly Hills, Malibu, Bel Air and Pacific Palisades, there are few places in the 30th that have not been immortalized by a television show or movie. The district is home to a large Jewish population, the University of California, Los Angeles, and the activist gay community of West Hollywood.

Eclectic, wealthy and Democratic describe many of the district's residents. Members of England's royal family have stayed at the Regent Beverly Wilshire hotel at the southern end of the exclusive Rodeo Drive shopping strip, and thousands annually crowd the streets of West Hollywood to witness the gay and lesbian pride parade. The district votes overwhelmingly Democratic in elections at all levels.

The district stretches north from the Santa Monica and Malibu beaches across the Santa Monica Mountains to Calabasas and Hidden Hills on the north side of the range.

The 30th is about three-fourths white and the economy is overwhelmingly white-collar. Entertainment executives lunch with financial advisers and real estate developers, and tourism brings in large amounts of money. Thousands flock annually to the legendary Grauman's Chinese Theater, where they can compare their handprints and footprints to those of the stars, or see Whoopi Goldberg's braids, preserved in cement. The area's six medical centers make health care an important economic engine.

MAJOR INDUSTRY

Entertainment, higher education, health care, tourism

CITIES

Los Angeles (pt.), 399,622; Santa Monica, 84,084; West Hollywood, 35,716

NOTABLE

Hugh Hefner's Playboy Mansion is where prominent Democrats, including presidential candidates Gary Hart, Jerry Brown and Jesse Jackson, have held fundraisers; Santa Monica Pier, an amusement park that stretches out into the ocean, was built in 1909 and features an antique carousel.